

## Message Text

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64

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 EB-11 OC-06 CCO-00 RSR-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01

COME-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03 NEA-10 NSAE-00

PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 USIA-12 MBFR-03 SAJ-01 USPS-02

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R 171721Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8132

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USNMR SHAPE

USDEL MC

USCINCEUR

CINCUSAFE

CINSUSAREUR

US AFPCS DIST BRUSSELS BELGIUM

US AFPCS EUR ME RGN RHEIN MAIN AB GERMANY DO

NATO SHAPE SUPPORT GROUP BELGIUM

USAFPCS ALEX VA DO

C O N F I D E N T I A L 4021

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: MILI MARR BE

SUB: BELGIAN CUSTOMS AND THE APO

REF: USAFPCS DIST BRUSSELS 131845Z JUL 73

1. JUDGING FROM INITIAL CONTACT WITH LOCAL CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES (REFTEL), IT WOULD APPEAR THAT BELGIANS INTEND TO IMPLEMENT THE RECENTLY ISSUED CUSTOMS DIRECTIVE IN A MANNER THAT WOULD NEITHER DISRUPT NOR COMPLICATE LOCAL APO OPERATIONS. MORE IM-  
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PORTANTLY, THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT THE BELGIAN AUTHORITIES

BELIEVE THAT IMPLEMENTATION WOULD NECESSARILY ENTAIL REMOVING APO MAIL FROM US CUSTODY AND CONTROL. IT IS CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT BELGIAN AUTHORITIES CONTEMPLATE THE POSSIBILITY OF ACTUALLY ASSESSING DUTIES ON INCOMING UNOFFICIAL PARCELS EXCEEDING 1250 BELGIAN FRANCS IN VALUE. IN ADDITION, IT IS RECALLED THAT IMPORT OR EXPORT LICENSES WILL BE REQUIRED BY TERMS OF THE BELGIAN DIRECTIVE FOR SHIPMENTS EXCEEDING 3000 BELGIAN FRANCS IN VALUE. AS REPORTED IN REFTEL, BELGIAN CUSTOMS OFFICERS HAVE PROPOSED THAT PROCEDURES BE TESTED DURING A TWO WEEK TRIAL RUN DURING WHICH NO DUTIES WILL BE COLLECTED.

2. WE SUGGEST THAT THE APO OFFICE AT ZAVENTEM AGREE TO THE PROPOSED TRIAL RUN, MAKING CLEAR TO ZAVENTEM CUSTOMS OFFICIALS THAT THE TEST PERIOD INVOLVES NO COMMITMENT TO SUBSEQUENT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BELGIAN DIRECTIVE ON A PERMANENT BASIS.

3. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE TWO WEEK TRIAL PERIOD SHOULD BEGIN NO EARLIER THAN JULY 30, IF THIS IS ACCEPTABLE TO BELGIAN CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES. THIS DELAY WOULD PERMIT THE EMBASSY TO HAVE INFORMAL AND LOW-KEY DISCUSSIONS WITH RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS IN THE MINISTRIES OF FINANCE, FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE IN ADVANCE OF THE INITIATION OF THE TRIAL PERIOD. OUR OBJECTIVES IN THESE CONTACTS WOULD BE (A) TO LEARN WHAT SPECIFIC CONCERNS MIGHT HAVE GENERATED THE ISSUANCE OF THE BELGIAN CUSTOMS DIRECTIVE AND B) TO POINT OUT THE POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS THAT COULD ARISE FROM THE ACTUAL ASSESSMENT OF DUTIES OR THE STRICT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE IMPORT OR EXPORT LICENSES. WE WOULD PLAN TO MAKE THE POINT THAT ONLY AN INSIGNIFICANT PORTION OF APO MAIL IS IN FACT SUBJECT TO BELGIAN CUSTOMS PAYMENT OR LICENSING REQUIREMENTS, WHEREAS THE POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS OF GRIEVANCES LODGED BY US MILITARY PERSONNEL REQUIRED TO PAY DUTIES (E.G. ON GENEROUS CHRISTMAS GIFTS FROM HOME) COULD THEMSELVES TAKE ON CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE. WE WOULD OF COURSE EXPRESS OUR COMPLETE READINESS TO COOPERATE FULLY WITH BELGIAN AUTHORITIES IN PREVENTING USE OF THE APO FOR THE INTRODUCTION INTO BELGIUM OF CONTRABAND GOOD OR OTHER ARTICLES REQUIRING SPECIAL CERTIFICATION.

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4. IN THE MEANTIME WE CONCUR FULLY IN THE RECOMMENDATION MADE IN USNMR SHAPE 131900Z THAT LOCAL APO OFFICE BE AUTHORIZED TO HIRE, AT LEAST ON TEMPORARY BASIS, FLEMISH SPEAKING TRANSLATOR. THIS ACTION WOULD IN NO WAY IMPLY A COMMITMENT WITH RESPECT TO OUR INTENDED REACTION TO THE BELGIUM CUSTOMS DIRECTIVE BUT WOULD CERTAINLY BE A SIGN OF OUR DESIRE TO COOPERATE AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH LOCAL CUSTOMS OFFICIALS. BOOCHEVER

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